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SUBJECT: 10/29 TAO PRESS BRIEFING: CHEN YUNLIN VISIT, ZHANG MINGQING INCIDENT

Summary

11. Key points from the October 29 Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) press briefing:

-- The Spokesman said that during Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) President Chen Yunlin's November 3-7 trip to Taiwan the two sides will implement agreements on maritime shipping, cargo charter flights, daily charter flights, a new direct air corridor, direct mail, and food safety.

-- The spokesperson did not comment specifically on Chen's itinerary, saying instead that many details are being worked out. He stated that "because of a tight schedule" Chen will not travel to central or southern Taiwan.

-- The spokesperson expressed confidence that Chen's visit would be "safe and smooth" and that security preparations on the Taiwan side are adequate.

-- The spokesperson said that ARATS Deputy Zhang Mingqing is "under observation and treatment" after being attacked by "a small number of extremists" in Tainan on October 21. He said that "most people in Taiwan" had condemned the assault, which demonstrates that the assailants do not represent the Taiwan people.

Chen Yunlin's Visit to Taiwan

12. At the regular Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) press briefing October 29, most of the questions related to ARATS President Chen Yunlin's November 3-7 visit to Taiwan. Spokesman Yang Yi noted that the main purpose of the trip is to implement agreements on maritime shipping, cargo charter flights, daily charter flights, a new direct air corridor, direct mail, and food safety. This series of agreements will benefit people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait by strengthening economic cooperation, reducing costs and increasing convenience for cross-Strait shippers and travelers. Yang noted that Chen will lead a delegation of 60 people, to include experts to discuss the international financial crisis. Yang did not answer specific questions about Chen's itinerary, exchanges of gifts, meetings with Taiwan leaders or whether Chen will hold a press conference. Asked about the issue of flags and titles used by Taiwan leaders, Yang said that the two sides have worked out "mutually acceptable" arrangements on the matter.

13. Responding to questions on whether ARATS and its counterpart in Taiwan, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), will discuss political issues and whether there is a timetable for a "peace agreement," Yang said that China will follow the principles of "first easy, then hard, first economics, then politics, and progress step by step" to resolve cross-Strait issues. As for political issues and problems "left over from history," the PRC hopes that "through joint efforts the two sides can create the conditions to gradually resolve the issues through consultations." China has a very positive attitude toward this, Yang said. The two sides should decide through consultations when political talks should start.

Security for the Visit

¶4. A Taiwan reporter asked if the 7,000 police assigned to the visit will be sufficient for Chen's personal security and whether he would bring his own bodyguards. The spokesman expressed his hope that the trip will be "safe and smooth" and said that security arrangements will be consistent with those established when SEF Chairman P.K. Chiang visited the Mainland. When asked how the Mainland would react if Chen encountered a violent incident, he reiterated the "safe and smooth" point.

Zhang Mingqing Incident

¶5. The spokesman commented that ARATS Deputy Zhang Mingqing is still "undergoing evaluation and treatment" following the "violent attack" in Tainan on October 21 by a "small number of extremists." China "sharply condemns" this incident and calls on Taiwan to punish the perpetrators and protect regular exchanges across the Taiwan Strait.

Yang commented that "most people in Taiwan have condemned the incident," which shows that the attackers do not represent the Taiwan people. In response to a Taiwan reporter's question about the TAO's reaction to allegations that Mainland-linked mobsters had kidnapped and threatened Tainan DPP councilman Wang Ting-yu, who had been involved in the assault on Zhang, the TAO spokesman angrily denounced the story as "a lie that is inconsistent and full of holes."

APEC

¶6. Asked about the selection of former Foreign Minister and former
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Control Yuan President Frederick Chien to represent Taiwan at the APEC summit in Peru in late November, the spokesman said he had nothing to release on the topic. He said that in reacting to this development, the PRC would "follow the precedent of previous APEC summits while taking into consideration positive changes in cross-Strait relations."

Other Issues

¶7. Other issues discussed:

--Kaohsiung Mayor: Asked about whether Kaohsiung Mayor and DPP member Chen Chu would be welcome to visit the Mainland to promote tourism, Yang said China welcomes exchanges that are conducive to promoting cross-Strait relations.

--Pandas: Yang commented that the two sides are making "active preparations" for the pandas "Tuan Tuan" and "Yuan Yuan" to move to Taipei.

--Trade Cooperation: The spokesman said the fourth Hunan-Taiwan Economic and Trade Exchange Cooperation Convention, from November 15-17 in Xiangtan City, will introduce many investment opportunities in Hunan Province.
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